



The President's Daily Brief

26 December 1972

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

26 December 1972

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

It appears that Hanoi's population is being evacuated. In South Vietnam, the enemy apparently hopes to launch a new round of attacks before the end of the year. (Page 1)

The Laotian Government's only base between the Plaine des Jarres and the Vietnamese border is preparing for a strong Communist assault. (Page 2)

The Lebanese Army has been fighting the fedayeen. (Page 3)

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VIETNAM

Hanoi's population apparently is being moved to safer areas. A North Vietnamese intercept of 23 December included the statement that Hanoi was being "completely evacuated." [redacted]

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[redacted] Hanoi's main railroad station had been heavily damaged and the city's electric power plant destroyed. Hanoi's radios are still experiencing technical difficulties resulting in impairment of audibility, but today's programs are being broadcast on schedule. The Hanoi airport apparently can be used by small planes. The International Control Commission's weekly flight from Saigon arrived there yesterday.

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Although the reports of evacuation say little about relocation sites, one of the messages indicated that families were being moved as units. This indicates that the relocation process is proceeding in an orderly manner.

* * *

The lull in fighting continues following the one-day cease-fire proclaimed by both sides on 24-25 December. Intercepts indicate that the Communists are telling their troops to observe the next 24-hour cease-fire slated for 31 December and 1 January.

There are, nevertheless, signs that the enemy hopes to launch a new round of attacks before the end of the year. [redacted]
COSVN has ordered its forces to attack major targets in the area of Saigon during the week between Christmas and New Year's Day. Enemy prisoners captured in the central highlands over the weekend had been told that their attacks had been part of a broader military effort. Communist main-force units have shifted closer to several government strongpoints in the northern provinces as well.

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LAOS

Bouam Long, the only government stronghold remaining north of the Plaine des Jarres, is preparing for a renewed Communist assault. Defending the base are 1,200 troops and several hundred armed villagers. Seven Communist battalions are closing on Bouam Long, and heavy artillery, including 130-mm. guns, and possibly tanks are moving over newly constructed roads into hills south of the town. Perimeter defenses are being probed by enemy patrols today under cover of light artillery shelling.

Should the enemy take Bouam Long--formerly important as a staging area for General Vang Pao's operations against Communist supply lines--the tactical situation in the north would not be drastically affected. Bouam Long's significance is chiefly psychological, as a holdout against the Communists. Its loss, however, would be a major blow to General Vang Pao's Meo tribesmen whose morale is already low after years of debilitating fighting.

Bouam Long withstood Communist sieges in 1970 and 1971, largely because of US air support.

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NOTES

Lebanon-Fedayeen: The Lebanese Army clashed twice with the fedayeen during the holiday weekend. One fight occurred after the fedayeen refused to evacuate one of their bases as ordered, the other skirmish erupted when army troops fired on fedayeen as they tried to move from one area to another. At least one guerrilla was killed. A series of similar sharp encounters occurred in early December as a result of fedayeen attempts to infiltrate areas of southern Lebanon near Israel--in violation of their agreement with the government.

West Germany: Disarmament experts and Foreign Office officials are preparing to recommend to Chancellor Brandt that West Germany should join France, Italy, and Britain in supporting the idea that initial force reductions in Europe should be limited to Soviet and American troops.

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The issue is far from settled, however; Defense Ministry experts, for example, still hold that German troops should be included in initial cuts of both stationed and indigenous forces.

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